

Trip Report: A Circuit in the Ceiriog Valley from Chirk Castle

Date: Feb 15th, 2025

Group: Steve (leader), Sarah, Anne, Neil, Christine, Dave, Jim G, Colin, Cate, Clare, Iain (with Pippa), Bruce & Lynn (with Cleo)

Total Distance: 11 miles **Total Ascent:** 1900 ft

After a week of generally grey and overcast skies, together with the Met Office forecasting persistent rain in the Chirk Castle area, it was a pleasant surprise to have a group of 13 signed up for this walk! And at least it wasn't raining as we set out from Bunbury, or on arrival at the castle car park. Nonetheless most of the group took a pessimistic view and chose to don full waterproofs before leaving the cars.

We set out in a north-westerly direction across the castle estate and then picked up the Offa's Dyke Path which led into woodland and then emerged at the end of a narrow lane. As we walked down the lane it was a surprise to meet, in quick succession, a number of large all-terrain vehicles, which were presumably in search of some challenging terrain. Our route continued through more woodland via a bridleway and then down a road to the village of Pontafadog, which translates as "Bridge of Madoc", taking its name from a bridge over the River Ceiriog. Until 10 years ago the village was well known as the home of a 1200 year-old oak tree, thought to be the oldest in the country.

We crossed the bridge and started to climb up a gentle hill through dense woodland on the south side of the valley. At about halfway to the top of the hill we stopped for refreshment.



At this point the tarmac road degraded into a rough track but the climb continued steadily, soon emerging from the woods into misty fields, over the highest point of the day and carefully avoiding a few large puddles!

As we descended on the Llwybr Ceiriog Trail we reached a point at which it crossed Offa's Dyke. This is a large linear earthwork that roughly follows the border between England and Wales. The structure is named after Offa, the Anglo-Saxon king of Mercia from AD 757 until 796, who is traditionally believed to have ordered its construction. Although its precise original purpose is debated, it delineated the border between Anglian Mercia and the Welsh kingdom of Powys. If interested see: [Offa's Dyke - Wikipedia](#).

Before long we were back in sight of the River Ceiriog and had to cover a mile or so on road, because of a path closure, before we reached a railway line. All safely across (!) we found a convenient fallen tree at which to stop for lunch.

From the lunch spot it was only a short distance down to the Llangollen Canal and over a bridge to the Chirk side of the canal.



A short walk along the canal then took us to Chirk Aqueduct which we crossed on the narrow path beside the canal (see image above and this link [Chirk Aqueduct - Wikipedia](#)). The path then continues beside the canal into Chirk Tunnel (see [Chirk Tunnel - Wikipedia](#)) and it presented us with the option of walking in darkness and single file for 421m. Perhaps surprisingly there was enthusiasm for this option rather than following roads! And I am pleased to report that we emerged safely from the tunnel about 10 minutes later without incident. A BUMS first I believe!

Happy to be out in daylight again we were soon back in the grounds of the castle estate and heading for the car park, where there were a lot more cars than when we left. In defiance of the weather forecast we had not received a soaking - mostly just a bit of dampness and some muddy waterproofs. And our good luck was emphasised as we drove to the Dysart through some heavy rain!

Thanks to all the group for contributing to an enjoyable day and especially to Neil, Dave, Bruce and Iain for doing the driving.

Steve